

*Why the
Revolutionary
Workers League*



5c

Revolutionary Workers' League of U. S.
CHICAGO

READ — SPREAD — SUBSCRIBE

to the

FIGHTING WORKER

**Popular Organ of the Revolutionary Workers League
(Affiliated to the International Contact Commission)**

**CONTAINS POPULAR ARTICLES DEALING WITH CURRENT
EVENTS, GIVING WORKING CLASS ANALYSIS AND PROGRAM.**

Published
November, 1945

by
DEMOS PRESS
708 N. Clark St.
Chicago, Ill.

READ — SPREAD — SUBSCRIBE

to the

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

**Theoretical Organ of the
International Contact Commission
for the Building of a New Fourth (4th) Communist International**

**CONTAINING THEORETICAL ARTICLES AND
ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS OF OUR TIMES.**

You are a class-conscious worker. You believe that capitalism is a decadent system, that the only hope for humanity is the establishment of a socialist order. You are opposed to imperialism and its wars, its hunger, its depressions, its misery. You advocate an economic system based on production for use instead of for profit.

If such are your beliefs — then you belong in the Revolutionary Workers League, U. S.

We know, of course, that there are other organizations that proclaim the need for a socialist order. There is the Socialist Party, the Social-Democratic Federation, the "Communist" (Stalinist) Party, both sections of the Trotskyist movement, the Socialist Workers Party (Cannonites) and the Workers Party (Schachtmanites), and various others. How does one choose? Why not join the largest one and be done with it? The subject certainly needs study.

Capitalism is a gigantic enterprise. It has been in the saddle for three hundred years and it has perfected an enormous machine to keep the working class subjugated. At its service stands a police force of hundreds of thousands, an army and navy to be used in case of emergencies, and many extra-legal institutions like the American Legion, the Ku Klux Klan and others that fight Communism and uphold the so-called "law and order." If you're hungry and you take a slice of bread a policeman arrests you because you violated private property. He doesn't arrest the employer who laid you off and who violated human rights by subjecting you to starvation. Oh no — the capitalists have a fine piece of paper, called the Constitution, and they have millions of laws written by capitalist lawyers, which protect private property, which make private property the holy of holies. That's part of the machine.

There's more to it — the courts which defend capitalist property rights from the likes of you and I, the administration which spreads the tentacles of private capital all over the world and organizes its defense against the working class, the Congress which passes laws to keep capitalism in power.

"HEAD-FIXING" INDUSTRY

These are the overt instruments through which capitalism rules. But there are even more important organs of rule. There is the giant "head-fixing industry" — the Church, the radio, the newspapers, the publishing business, the schools, the movies, the colleges. All these institutions are supposed to make each and every one of us patriotic and a believer in

"law and order." Each of these institutions "protects" us from that horrible thing called Communism. It tells us fables and lies about how horrible Communism is and how good Capitalism is. It praises private enterprise and individual initiative to the skies and it condemns collectivism and Socialism. After twenty or thirty years of that kind of diet most people are pretty well conditioned to it.

Then too, there are the various escape industries, like the movies, the theatre, sports, etc. These industries help people NOT to think. They're supposed to — under capitalism — put you in dreamland, wishing you were Greta Garbo or Clark Gable or Joe DiMaggio, instead of just plain John Worker who must fight for a better REAL world.

And, if your mind can get through all these pitfalls, there is a final recourse that capitalism has: it utilizes agents within the ranks of the labor movement to betray the working class from within — agents like John L. Lewis, Phil Murray, Bill Green, William Foster, Norman Thomas, and a host of others whom we call REFORMISTS, people who are for the reform, not the overthrow, of the capitalist system. (As a sort of tail to the reformist kite there are the CENTRISTS, who speak of Revolution but who propose merely Reformist action. We shall deal with them later.)

SOCIALISM AND SCIENCE

Can such a gigantic machine be overturned by pious wishes or disorganized activities? Obviously not. Can a social order which spends one trillion dollars for bloody war and kills off at least 50 million people every generation — can such a social order be "converted" without a scientific understanding of what makes it tick? No, it can not.

Socialism is impossible without science, Revolutionary Marxian Science. If you can not explain capitalism then you can not overthrow it; you will fall into one of its snares after another, you will become prey to the babblings of the reformists, the liberals or the centrists.

Now, what does make Capitalism tick? Why does it have wars and depressions? All that will tell us why we need a Revolutionary Marxian Party, why we must build the Revolutionary Workers League.

Capitalism is torn with contradictions, irremediable contradictions. It is based on the one hand, on socialized production where everyone shares in the making of commodities; but on the other hand the finished product and the profits are appropriated by a few greedy entrepreneurs. This fundamental contradiction of capitalism is the root cause of depressions, tariff wars, diplomatic wars, military wars, and fascism. Constantly capitalism is beset by depressions — each time growing longer and deeper. The decadent system of private capital is wracked with the disease of overproduction, of starvation

amidst plenty, of idle men, idle machines, idle capital. Do we need any proof of this assertion? We saw it during the depression of the thirties. We are now beginning to see it again. At the outset of the present imperialist war they told us there would be no more privation, no more depressions. But the very first announcements after the "end" of this second blood bath stated that even the government expects 8 million unemployed in six months, that billions of dollars of factories and machines are to be "retired" — are expendable.

Why? Is everybody clothed, sheltered and fed on a decent standard? Are the masses suffused with the luxuries that our economy can offer? Is there no more starvation? Why are the factories retired and its men and its capital made idle? Only the chaos, the contradictions of the capitalist system can explain this phenomena — starvation amidst plenty, an economy of scarcity. Capitalism is interested not in HUMAN rights, but in PROPERTY rights and PROFITS. Consequently it can permit such things to occur. No profits, no production. No production, starvation, fascism, war.

WAR AND OVERPRODUCTION

Periodically the capitalists must go to war to get rid of their surplus produce, their surplus capital. They must find markets for themselves, but since the masses at home can not buy back all that they produce, the capitalists must look for markets elsewhere. Unfortunately the markets of the world have already been stolen and redivided a number of times and so the only way to get markets and spheres of influence is to steal them from other imperialist powers.

That's what the Second World War was all about. ALL the capitalist powers were in a crisis, some a little more, some a little less. There was no longer any room for six great powers. The three "have-not" nations, Italy, Japan and Germany had to take the initiative for the war because they no longer could stand the strains of overproduction as well as the richer and more bloated powers, like the U. S. and Britain. But ALL the imperialists were responsible for the war. Now that the present phase of the war has come to an end, it is easy to see just what the U. S. was interested in; it is plain as the nose on anyone's face that Uncle Sam was in this thing to gain control over Asia, to exploit the markets of Europe and Africa and Latin America. American "advisors" are in almost every country in the world, being backed by American military forces, stripping the nations and gaining markets. "Winning the war" has meant more booty for the rich imperialists — more markets, more spheres of influence.

PERMANENT CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

But the crisis of American capitalism still exists. New technological developments in the course of the war heighten-

ed the contradictions of American capitalism. It developed an economy producing 199 billion dollars worth of goods and services. In 1929 America produced only 79 billions, and that was a banner year. With only four or five million more workers American capitalism was able to produce 2½ times as much as it produced sixteen years before. Where will this surplus be marketed? No one in Washington or anywhere else knows. Even the greatest optimists are only hoping for a national income of 125 billions. The number of permanent unemployed can easily be deduced from these figures.

The fact of the matter is that capitalism can produce only for mass murder, for war; it can not produce for peace and plenty. It is a system of society based on scarcity and slow (sometimes rapid) starvation.

Well, you say, we know most of that. But where does that lead? What has that got to do with the Revolutionary Workers League? The Trotskyites, for instance, admit the correctness of the above statements. Where do you differ from them?

LET'S GET IT STRAIGHT: CAPITALISM CAN NOT BE REFORMED, IT IS SICK AND DECADENT THROUGH AND THROUGH! That's the important starting point of our thesis. Capitalism can not bring one more good period to humanity. In fact it must not only reduce world living standards but it will even cause a great decline in science and culture.

Note, for instance, how capitalism spends 2 billion dollars to perfect an Atom Bomb which destroys 150,000 persons in one minute, but it can not spend such monies for the scientific research on misery and hunger.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS LEAGUE AND OTHER POLITICAL PROGRAMS IS THAT WE PROPOSE THE REVOLUTIONARY OVERTHROW OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM, WHILE EVERY OPPORTUNIST PARTY (SOCIALISTS, STALINISTS, TROTSKYIST CENTRISTS, ETC.) PROPOSES MERELY THE REFORM OR MODIFICATION OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM!

That's the nub of the whole problem! We state that any attempt to patch up the capitalist system leads only to confusion, demoralization and disaster — and the others, in varying degrees, state that we must modify the system first, we must compromise with it or its apologists before we can start the fight for socialism. We are opposed to class collaboration with the capitalists, in any form; we state categorically that only independent action of the working class can lead to emancipation of humanity from the capitalist virus.

PART 2

To put things in a nut shell: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS LEAGUE AND THE OPPORTUNIST TENDENCIES OF TROTSKYISM, STALINISM, AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, IS THAT WITHOUT EXCEPTION THESE OTHER TENDENCIES SUPPORT ONE FORM OF CAPITALISM AGAINST ANOTHER. That may sound a little bit conceited and to the uninitiated as a little bit off the deep end. After all do not the Trotskyists at least proclaim their everlasting devotion to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism?

Well the subject isn't really that simple. Remember what we said before about the vast complexity of the capitalist system? Capitalism has a number of faces. It utilizes each one as the occasion warrants. For instance, in periods when the working masses are relatively docile and when the profit of the capitalists are still large enough to grant some minor concessions to those masses, capitalism can parade as "democratic." In periods or places, however, where the stress is much greater, where people are starving, where there is danger of revolt, where there is tension and unrest, there capitalism can maintain itself only by trotting out its most brutal police hooligans and extra legal fascist squads. In other words, capitalism exists by alternating its gloved hand and its mailed fist. So long as you do not threaten to overthrow it, so long as it is not in deep crisis, so long as it is able to bribe the masses at home on the basis of its robberies from the colonial and other oppressed peoples, so long will capitalism be content to utilize its cheapest form of rule, bourgeois democracy. But when times change — as it has been changing in this whole period of imperialism — then capitalism trots out its military dictatorship, its fascist hooligans.

There is no Chinese wall between bourgeois democracy, the left arm of capitalism, and fascism the right arm of capitalism. As a matter of fact one dovetails neatly into the other. Look around you at every country in the world today and you will find even in the "noblest" of democracies all kinds of decree rule, all kinds of one-man actions, all kinds of regimentation and the limitation of all rights of the individual. A period will finally come in the U. S., Britain, and other such countries similar to the period of 1930-32 in Germany, where decree rule will go through a rapid transition to open fascism.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY LEADS TO FASCISM

To support bourgeois democracy in any form merely leads inevitably to the victory of fascism. If that has been proven once in the last 30 years, it has been proven at least three dozen times. Millions of workers are buried underground, and the imperialist war itself was only possible because we, the work-

ers of the world, failed to understand this lesson. By supporting the Social Democrats in Germany until 1932, the German workers permitted confusion, demoralization and inaction to creep into their ranks and permitted Hitler to ascend to power. By supporting popular frontism in Spain, the original victories of the workers in the first three months of the civil war 1936 were dissipated and fascism was able to conquer. By supporting popular frontism in Greece towards the end of the second imperialist war, the Stalinists made possible the victory of the military dictatorship of the British puppets.

There is no lesson more fundamental than this one in our epoch. **Support of bourgeois democracy in any manner, shape, or form can lead only to total defeat of the proletariat.**

In the light of all this let us examine the positions of these various political tendencies. The Socialists openly proclaim the need for an "evolutionary" change. They propose to establish Socialism at the ballot box. You see, if only we elect Norman Thomas as President we will have a new social order. Such childish blindness! As if a system which will spend a trillion dollars for murder and plunder will permit the mere election of a couple of former preachers to stand in their way. History is full of depositions of people who were against the powers that be, by the use of force and violence. During its first world war our capitalist congress ejected from its halls those socialist who continued to make Socialist speeches during the war. In our epoch all things are settled in terms of force and violence, either the force of the exploiters against us or our own united strength, our own force against the system of exploitation. The Socialists (both wings, the Thomas and O'Neill wings) are a pretty decadent clique. Since 1935 they have been constantly losing face and power here in the U.S. None the less one fine day capitalism will attempt to utilize this potential left arm just as the counter-parts of Thomas and O'Neill (Bevan and Attlee) are being utilized today in Britain.

STALINIST MISLEADERSHIP BETRAYS WORKERS

The Stalinist form of reformism differs considerably from that of the Social Democrats. In the first place Uncle Joe Stalin is usurping both the material resources and the political prestige of the great October Revolution in Russia. Hundreds of millions of people are today under the ideological or military domination of Stalinism. This complex political phenomena is like a muck rainbow stretching across the earth. In one place it plays the role of an out and out reformist. In China today it grants agricultural reforms to the peasantry but confines those reforms to the framework of capitalism and stifles every effort of the working class and peasants to move toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. In central Europe, on the other hand, Stalinism is playing in a number of places an open counter-

revolutionary role (such as all reformists play in times of acute class strife). Stalinism has been the main prop for world capitalism these last ten years at least. Without it this imperialist war could not have been waged. It utilized the prestige of the October revolution to gain the allegiance of the masses of the world to the left arm of the capitalists bourgeois democracy. It supported the wars of bourgeois democracy. It supported the outstanding leaders of bourgeois democracy, Churchill and Roosevelt. It supported the civil peace of bourgeois democracy, the no strike pledge, the bond drives, the patriotic fervor. Even though at the end of the war it is making a slight modification in its line, it is nevertheless still within the framework of bourgeois democracy, for Stalinism is today, as before the war, proclaiming the program of popular frontism, a bloc with the left wing capitalists, Daladier, Reynaud, New Dealism, and their ilk. And also with the social democrats and other people who believe not in the overthrow of capitalism, but in its slow (impossible) reformation.

Well, you might say that everything the Revolutionary Workers League says about Social Democracy and Stalinism is true. They do not stand for a revolutionary program. Yes, that is so. But what about Trotskyism? Every time there is a militant force in Europe the American newspapers never lose an opportunity to howl that the Trotskyites are loose again. Doesn't that show that the Trotskyites are real revolutionaries? Doesn't it show that they **do** believe in the forceful overthrow of the capitalists?

History is full of examples of people and organizations that use left wing phrases to cover up right wing actions. Yes, we admit the Trotskyites (both the Cannon and Schachtman wings) call for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in WORDS. But what of the deeds they propose? Do those deeds differ from those of the Stalinists for instance? Just look. Both Trotsky parties stand on the platform of left popular frontism, of left support to the reformists and the left capitalists. Since 1934 the Trotskyists program of action has been one of support to the left arm of capitalism. During the days of popular frontism in France, the Trotskyites demanded not a working class dictatorship, a Soviet rule but . . . a Blum-Cachin government. In other words, the same popular front government that then existed with the exception that the open liberal capitalist should be ousted. During the Spanish Revolution of 1936-37 Trotskyism spoke abstractly of the need for a working class order. Concretely, however, it proposed material aid to the loyalist capitalists and it demanded a Cabellero-CNT Government, another popular front regime. Everywhere and at all times Trotskyism proposed a program of action to prop up bourgeois democracy. During the recent British election campaign the slogan was "Labor to Power." It called upon the workers to sup-

port the left arm of capitalism; Bevin and Attlee and company. In America Cannon and Co. are also for a labor party, a third capitalist party similar in content to all popular frontism.

The arguments of the Trotskyites runs somewhat as follows: "We can not hope to achieve power in the immediate future; we must therefore, support the lesser of two evils." In his day Lenin catechised such revisionism mercilessly. He pointed out how the Kautskist support of the lesser of two evils could only lead to the support of the greatest evil, capitalism itself. And so it actually happened. Kautsky, the world's greatest Marxist at one time, supported the counter-revolution against the Bolsheviks and made common cause with Noske and Schiedeman against the workers of Germany.

Trotskyism repeats the same fatal blunders. Its program of words may sound very revolutionary but its deeds, its program of action, are based upon the mere reform of capitalism, are based upon purely parliamentary activity. Consider that program for a few minutes. It is a program that calls for support of Wagner Acts; \$30 every Thursday; a 5% ceiling on profits; a 25% ceiling on salaries; an over emphasis on parliamentary action, (getting "good men" into office); for trade union conscription, (in other words under the capitalist agents within the trade union movement); for left wing support of the PAC; and dozens of other capitalist panaceas. Lenin coined an excellent term for these revisionists. He said such people are "Centrists." They are revolutionary in words but reformist in deeds. He viciously condemned the Russian centrists, the Mensheviks whose program was in fundamentals the same as the program of the present Trotskyites.

4th INTERNATIONAL DEGENERATES

Is that hard to believe? Isn't it true that Trotsky was once a great leader of the revolution? Yes, no one denies that. In his day, Kautsky too was a glorious leader of the Marxian movement. We do not take away from Trotsky his achievements during the Russian revolution and for a decade and a half following it. But Marxism is a science, and that scientist — no matter how brilliant or excellent his scientific achievements of the past were — who veers away from that science must be condemned and criticized. Study the writings of Leon Trotsky from 1923 to 1929 and compare them with the writings of Canon and Shachtman and company today. Every fundamental theory that Trotsky laid down in that period, his condemnation of bourgeois democracy, his theory of permanent revolution, his catechism of popular frontism, his condemnation of parliamentary cretinism, all these things have been completely reversed by Trotsky and the Trotskyites today. Their program against the war was a pacifist program. Idle condemnation in words of imperialist war. They opposed revolutionary defeatism.

They opposed the policy of working for and wishing for the defeat of our own imperialist state. The testimony of Cannon at his trial in Minneapolis brought out in sharp relief this position of support of bourgeois democracy. He emphasized and re-emphasized the fact that he was for a peaceful change of the capitalist order.

The Revolutionary Workers League stands unalterably opposed to capitalism in any form. We are opposed to labor parties, popular fronts or any other form of left capitalist rule. We state that in so called peacetime the working class must be organized into trade unions on a program of class struggle to fight against the employer and his state, for immediate demands. Such struggles serve as a dress rehearsal for the future proletarian revolution, they serve to gain temporary concessions for the masses and they serve to unify the ranks of the working class. This struggle for immediate demands, however, must be coordinated with the struggle for ultimate demands, which means the struggle for the proletarian revolution. There is no short cut to this struggle, no get rich scheme, no deals with the left arm of capitalism.

In periods of war, the working class must extend its class struggle tactics into the military sphere. It must propose fraternization, elimination of the officer caste, democratic elections of officer, the establishment of soldier councils at the front and workers councils at the rear, strike actions against the capitalists, and all other strategies and tactics leading toward the weakening of the capitalist state and its eventual overthrow.

Finally in revolutionary periods, the working class must depend upon its own strength to organize workers councils, workers militia, and factory councils and other forms of dual power, to smash and obliterate the bourgeois state, to expropriate the capitalists in industry and finance, and to set up workers' control of production for use under a workers council government.

The Revolutionary Workers League knows that these are not simple tasks. Life offers many opportunities for the revolutionists to cross sides and become an agent for the enemy class. After all it is easier to be with the side that runs the show. It is easier to support labor parties than to call upon the working class to support only one political party, THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS PARTY, both in parliamentary action and particularly and especially in the class struggle itself. But the easiest road is not always the best road. The easiest road frequently leads to demoralization and defeat. We must not, we can not again fall into the trap of opportunism. We must not and we dare not support bourgeois democracy or its friends in any form.

R. W. L. HAS MARXIAN PROGRAM

Yes, the Revolutionary Workers League is a small organization today. Its supporters around the world in Britain, France, and Germany, Australia, and elsewhere are very meager. But better a scientific weapon — a Marxian program in the hands of a few — than an unscientific weapon, a fatal time-bomb, in the hands of many. History has shown too frequently how large organizations, Social Democrats, Stalinists, have lead only to the defeat and how pitifully small organizations have been able to lead the working class to victories. After all, how big were the forces of Marxism in the first world war? How well known, how strong were the forces of Lenin or of Leibknecht and Luxemburg? Pitifully weak. Their numbers could be counted in terms of a few bakers' dozens, rather than thousands. Nevertheless armed with Marxian science and a program for independent working class action these few individuals became the fighting standards for hundreds of millions a few years later. We of the Revolutionary Workers League do not claim that we are the party of the revolution. We are only a league, a skeleton national organization. But we aspire to win over and unite in the best traditions of Lenin and Marx the advanced workers of America into such a revolutionary Marxian party.

If you, comrade, are a class-conscious worker, if you believe in the establishment of the socialist order, if you are becoming worried about American forms of fascism, about American concentration camps, about American unemployment and new depressions, if you're terrified by the thought of impending wars against the Soviet Union and counter-revolutions against the workers in Europe and Asia; in other words if you are a human being who wants to protect yourself and who wants to fight the battle of humanity then your place is with us.

JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS LEAGUE.

Request Date: 09-DEC-2010
Expiration Date: 20-DEC-2010

\$20.00

Printed Date: 09-DEC-2010

ILL Number: 

TGQ or OCLC #: 

ILL Number: 4272721

TGQ or OCLC #: 71891544

Call Number: 0-210 A0L 52:9

ID: TXI

Format: Monograph

ISBN/ISSN:

Title: Why the Revolutionary workers league.

Pub. Place: Chicago, Revolutionary Workers League of
U.S. [1945]

Borrower: TEXAS STATE UNIV-SAN MARCOS -
Interlibrary Loan

Address: 64 SATvia
TEXpress/AlkekLibrary/Interlibrary
Loan/Texas State University-San
Marcos/601 University Drive/San Marcos,
TX 78666

Patron Name: Wright, Jonathan

Patron e-mail:

Service Level:

Service Type: Loan

Delivery Method: Library Mail

Max Cost: USD50

Request Notes: FAX/ARIEL:512-245-3002/Ariel
147.26.108.32 OCLC Req. Ex. Source:
ILLiad

Payment Type: IFM

Need By: 07-JAN-2011

Verification Source: <TN:231943><ODYSSEY:147.26.110.59/
LL> OCLC

Copyright Info:

Supplier Reference: 

Supplier Reference: ILLNUM:71891544

Requester Symbol: OCLC:TXI

Local request number: ILLNUM:71891544

Owned By: UDI

Return To: ILL SHIELDS LIBRARY / UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS / 100 N.W.
QUAD / DAVIS CA 95616-5292 / U.S.A./
ARIEL: 169.237.75.50 / FAX
530-752-7815/
shieldsinterloan@ucdavis.edu